

An Adventure with Squaws

By GERTRUDE NORTON

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When my brother Frank drew a lucky number entitling him to a claim in the El Reno land district, he insisted that I should go and keep house for him while he was "holding it down."

"But you have not got any house to keep as yet," I objected; but Frank only smiled.

"I shall have a house inside of two weeks," he announced; "so you may as well pack up and get ready."

He was as good as his word. Inside of two weeks his "house" was completed—if a "dug-out" in the side of a hill, with a sod annex, was worthy of the name.

"You see," he explained, "I got rid of the job of hauling lumber 20 miles by simply using what nature had provided and placed at hand. I didn't need anything from the carpenter shop but a window and a door and a few boards; these I took with me. Oh, we shall be as snug as a bug in a rug, and will need only a few articles of furniture. It is only the imagination that suggests the necessity of such trumpery as this," he went on with a deprecatory gesture toward the furniture in our parlor.

I was not surprised at Frank's outburst. He had spent three years on



I Was Surprised to See Three Kiowa Squaws Standing Before Me.

the range and had imbibed much of the spirit of the wild life.

"But my piano—I must have that," I replied.

Frank looked at the ceiling and gave vent to a prolonged whistle. "A pianoforte in a dug-out!" he said. "But of course you are only joking!"

I assured him that I was not.

"But—what would the boys think of us?" he asked.

"What boys?"

"The boys off the range that got claims down in the Wolf Creek valley."

"Do you think it necessary to consult them about our household affairs?"

"But the absurdity of the proposition; how are we to ignore that?" he asked.

"Never mind," I replied. "We shall manage that all right. I know it must be very lonely on a claim, and I know you would not want me to do without the comfort of my piano."

"Of course not, Sis; but you must know that in a so-called house the acoustics would naturally be abominable," and he laughed softly. "But if you are bound to introduce a pianoforte into Wolf Creek valley for the benefit of its society, I suppose you'll have to have your way." So the matter was settled, and when my goods were packed my piano was among them.

Frank's shack stood on the side of a little elevation overlooking Wolf creek, and it was a beautiful place; but the fact that not a sign of human habitation was in sight gave it an aspect of loneliness and desolation that was almost oppressive at first. As the days went by and as I became accustomed to the isolation I grew to like it. I busied myself in doing what I could to make the interior of our home more attractive. We had but two rooms, separated by a partition of roofing paper, and as these were very small I soon had the walls covered with paper and the few pictures I had brought.

I used the boxes our household goods had been packed in to make various articles of furniture. The smaller ones I constructed into stools, which I covered with colored prints. The larger ones I used to make a couch, and this I covered with cretonne of fanciful design, stuffing it with the feather-like prairie grass. I fashioned some sofa pillows out of the same material used in upholstering the couch, and these I placed in one corner, draping it with dimity curtains.

When Frank saw what I had been doing he laughed. "I suppose you must have something to do to while away the time," he commented. "What a pity you did not bring a chafing dish, a samovar and a five-o'clock tea set! The leaders of the social set of

Wolf Creek valley may take it into their heads to pay us their respects."

"Then there is a social set in Wolf Creek valley?"

"I suppose so," he replied. "Most of our neighbors, I find, are Kiowas, who took allotments in the valley. I think Lame Dog, the Kiowa, might be considered as the leader of the fashionable set. He is very dissipated, drinks and gambles and has three wives. Lame Dog usually makes his calls under cover of darkness, invariably carrying away with him—unknown to his host—some little souvenir of the visit, such as a pony or other detached property. But the three Mrs. Lame Dog, we may expect, will use more formality in their calls, and I should not be surprised to see them drop in any day."

I was half persuaded that Frank was only joking, but nevertheless I was quite sure that he was in earnest when he continued:

"If they should happen to drop in you will be expected to offer them something to eat. An Indian always expects this. It will do no harm to keep on friendly terms with them."

But despite Frank's admonition, I think I should have shut the door on the visitors when they came—for they did come some three days later—had it not been for the sympathy I had for the little copper-colored papooses strapped on boards, and the fact that some of Frank's friends on the range had brought us nearly a whole quarter of beef, which equipped me to meet the demands of the occasion.

I was preparing dinner and Frank was sitting by the window cleaning his rifle when, happening to step to the door, I was surprised to see three Kiowa squaws standing before me. They were very wretched and dirty, but perfectly healthy specimens of humanity. Each was wrapped in a blanket and carried on her back something that resembled a snowshoe, to which was bound with buckskin thongs a little brown papoose.

The visitors greeted me in broken English, and insisted on shaking hands with me. Then, without more ado, they entered the shanty and began inspecting the furniture and draperies with child-like simplicity.

The instinct of barter is strong in the Indian, and they began to banter me to trade. One offered me her blanket for the drapery in the corner, and another a pair of moccasins for the covering on the couch. They were all three talking at once, gesticulating at this and that article of furniture, each trying as well as her limited vocabulary would permit to strike a bargain with me, so that in my bewilderment I felt as if I had suddenly been called to preside over a bargain counter.

Frank looked on the scene with evident amusement. I was helpless and knew not what to say or do. All the time I was planning in my mind how to get rid of the disagreeable visitors, I think Frank divined what was in my mind, for presently he suggested that the quickest and surest solution was to serve the visitors with refreshments, and I was glad enough to act on the suggestion.

When the meal was finished they sat down in the middle of the floor and began to jabber to one another in their own language. Presently they spied the piano which was open, and it was evident that the sight of it aroused their curiosity to the highest pitch. They gathered about the instrument, talking volubly and touching it with their hands as if it had been some sort of an animal which they expected to move at their touch.

"Heap teeth!" cried one, waving her hand in the direction of the keyboard.

"Oh! Mah-chee-loo-thee!"

I was quite sure they had never seen a piano before, for when one of them happened to touch one of the keys, the sound produced caused her to jerk her hand away and step back in momentary terror.

At this juncture Frank suggested that I play for my visitors, and moved by a sudden impulse, I sat down on the stool and struck the keys. The effect on the visitors was startling. They retreated quickly to the far end of the room, jabbering incessantly and pointing to the instrument. Turning my gaze from them I went on playing, selecting a piece from Wagner—supposing that it would likely prove as pleasing to the uncultivated ear of the three Kiowas as anything else.

I must have presented a strange—even a terrifying aspect—for as the notes died away, I turned to find that the visitors had disappeared and Frank was laughing.

I went to the door to see the three squaws beating a retreat from the house. At sight of me in the doorway they uttered excited ejaculations, muttering: "Heap crazy!"

I never saw the three Mrs. Lame Dog again, nor was I bothered by any more visitors from the tribe, but I learned afterwards that I was known as the "Mad White Squaw," who made the big box howl like the hungry coyotes, which Frank declared was a very fitting tribute to my art as a musician. But for all his badinage, I am sure that he was glad I brought my piano to the claim, for he remarked that it not only served to make me more contented, but opened up for the instrument a wider field of usefulness, not the least of which was its use as an extinguisher of unwelcome visitors.

Sandbox.

Pearl—Let me see. I wonder what it was that Pandora had in that wonderful box?

Ruby—Oh, I guess it was a new autumn hat.—Chicago Daily News.

As the World Wags.

As our inclinations, so our opinions.—Goethe.

BABS IN THE CITY

By ARMIGER BARCLAY

(Copyright.)

"Well, how did you like the city, Babs?" asked the admiral.

Babs, perched on a high stool in front of the tape-machine, ceased pulling the paper ribbon through her fingers and looked up.

"I'm waver bovered," says she. "It's the figures. I never was good at arifmetick."

"Oh, the quotations! They are puzzling when you're not used to them," agrees the admiral.

"I never shall be," admits Babs. "I never could learn the multiplication table. When people say eight times nine's fifty-free, how can you tell it's true?"

The admiral ponders the indictment before he answers. "Your illustration certainly does place arithmetic in a new light. All the same, business would be rather dull on the stock exchange without it. Eh, Mr. Hands?" Babs throws a glance over her shoulder at the stock broker. "If fings go up free points how much would I make on a fousand?" she asks him.

The question took him by surprise. He had been regarding the earl's small daughter with great interest, but hardly as a potential dealer.

"It depends, Lady Barbara," he smiles. "Depends whether it's stock or shares."

"I was flunkin' of Mexicans—second prefs," observes Babs, sagely.

It is as much as Mr. Hands can do to answer. "A rise of three points on a thousand Mexicans means £30 profit," he stammers.

"Fanks," says Babs, and becomes immersed in the tape once more.

People who meet Babs for the first time are usually bewildered by her baby-like perspicuity, and the stock broker is no exception to the rule. The admiral evades his glances of stupefaction by addressing Babs.

"What is the trouble, little lady?" he asks, leaning over her chair.

"Nofin'; I'm waver busy," she answers without moving her eyes from the tape.

The admiral dutifully moves away and rejoins the earl and Mrs. Fane, who are now in consultation with Mr. Hands. Mrs. Fane has certain investments to make, and the earl, her



The Men Come and Stand Over Her, Watching the Ribbon.

trustee, has accompanied her into the city. For reasons not yet apparent, Babs has insisted on being of the party, and persuaded the admiral to make it a partie carree.

While the tape machine ticks and jerks under the regard of her big blue eyes, the others go into the merits of Japanese fairs, colonial government securities and English rails, and in due course Mrs. Fane's business is disposed of.

"We may as well have a flutter, now we're here," suggests the earl to his sailor friend.

The admiral concurs with a nod. "What would you advise?" he asks the stock broker.

"Grand Trunks and Hudson Bays are looking up," answers Mr. Hands impartially.

"You'd much better stand in wiv me," murmurs Babs from the other end of the room.

Mr. Hands sits up with a start, then turns an inquiring face to his clients. "What is it, Babs?" asks the admiral. "I didn't know you were an authority on stock exchange transactions."

"I'm perfectly serious," insists Babs. "If you want to earn your winter's corn, buy Mexican second prefs."

Mr. Hands, through his place-nez, eyes her in a fascinated way, but feels compelled to dissent. "The very last thing to touch. No dividend expected, you know," he observes in an undertone to the earl.

"I know it's not expected," returns Babs, whose sharp ears have caught the words. "But there's goin' to be a dividend, all ve same. It's a stable secret."

"My dear child!" reproves Mrs. Fane, fearful of the stock broker taking offense. "How can you know any thing about it?"

"Oh, I've known it for a couple of fortnights. I had it stwilt from the Beiststeins."

"Beiststeins?" repeats Mrs. Fane. "I

never heard of them. Babs does get to know the strangest people!"

"Beiststein!" exclaims Mr. Hands with sudden interest. "He's the leading operator in the Mexican market!"

"Where did you pick them up, Babs?" inquires her father.

"I didn't. They picked me up in the park one day and took me for a wide in their motor car. It's a Cantilever, and mops up petwot by the bucketful. That's how I got my illustrated froat."

"Mops!" gasps Mrs. Fane. "Really, Babs, you do get hold of the most extraordinary—"

"Let's hear about her new friends," interposes the earl. "Who are they, Babs?"

"I only know Percy, weally. He's their son. I met him at a juvenile party; but I got my maid to look them up in 'Who's Who,' and it says they're an old Jacobite family. There is somefin' curious about their noses. And old Mr. Beiststein takes hours to tell you anyfing—even wiv all the hs left out."

"But where do they live?" demands Mrs. Fane.

"In a place called Bayswater—where the 'buses come from," explains Babs.

"Was it at the party that Mr. Percy became confidential about Mexicans?" asks the admiral.

Babs allows her diminutive shoulder a slightly contemptuous shrug. "Yes," she admits. "When a boy is epwils wiv you he always tells you his pwivate affairs."

Mrs. Fane deems it essential to lift her eyebrows censoriously.

"It was private, then?" ponders the earl.

"Ravher, daddy! He said the only over person besides me who knew a word about it was the head rabbit."

There is a pause while they revolve her meaning.

"Chief Rabbit!" exclaims Mr. Hands, with sudden inspiration. "It must be something very exceptional, or Beiststein wouldn't—would you mind telling us exactly what he said, my dear?"

Before Babs answers she opens the little jeweled bag that hangs on her wrist and exhibits a banknote.

"You'll put this on for me?" she asks. "It's some of my 'Sawitch' winnin's."

"That's all right, Babs," promises the admiral.

"Well," proceeds Babs, while the three men hang on her words, "he said he'd heard his faver say that Mexicans were goin' to soar to heaven when the dividend came out, and that if I could pick up a few seconds prefs. in the street next Friday before free o'clock I should go home feelin' 18 carat. And I wasn't to bweave a word to anyone."

"What a little horror the boy must be!" deprecates Mrs. Fane.

"He is," allows Babs; "but it's a soft fling all the same."

"Friday—three o'clock!" muses Mr. Hands, looking at his watch. "If we only can—"

"Spoil the Egyptians!" augments the earl grimly.

There is a short consultation between the three men and then Mr. Hands hurries out.

Five minutes later he returns, rather out of breath, and announces that he has got 11,000 second preference at 61¼—five each for the earl and the admiral, and the odd thousand for Babs.

"It's like racin', only not so excitin'," observes Babs as she turns once more to the tape.

As she speaks, the machine, which has been silent for half a minute, recommences ticking. The men come and stand over her, watching it. A good yard and a half of ribbon slowly exudes in spasmodic jerks, giving the prices of various stocks and shares. The office clock points to five minutes past three and Mr. Hands, watching it, grows anxious.

"Here they come!" cries Babs, as the words MEX 1st appear, followed by the price, and then 2nd is disclosed with the quotation 61—½. Mr. Hands seizes the ribbon and reads off the figures that are now coming as fast as the operator at the other end can send them.

"Two to a half—three—three and a quarter—four!" He ignores the first preference stock. "Four and a half—five! Dividend three and three-quarters per cent! Well, I never!"

"That's good enough!" cries the earl. "Better close. They'll be up another point by the time you get to the house!"

Once more Mr. Hands hurries out—this time, in his excitement, forgetting his hat. Babs climbs down from her stool.

"It's all over bar the shoutin'," she remarks calmly. "How much have we won, daddy?"

"By Jove, they've touched 66!" cries the admiral at the tape.

"You'll rake in at least 60 for your share, young woman!" laughs the earl.

Babs looks up with a smile at the admiral. "Well, how do you like the city, shipmate?" she asks mischievously.

"I think it's a thundering fine place to come to—with you, Babs!" is his prompt answer.

"I'm so glad," she draws. "But I fink the Beiststeins have a good deal to do wiv it. I shall have to leave cards on them to-morrow, I suppose."

"You may as well leave mine, too, Babs," says Mrs. Fane meekly.

How is This?

If you hear that a woman is a genius it does not surprise you. But if somebody says she can cook you fall dead.—Chicago Record-Herald.

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